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ABSTRACT

The Multicultural/Bilingual Division at NIE was established in January of 1975 as a reflection of the increased attention to cultural and linguistic factors in education. The emergence of this interest in minority education programs and research can be traced through three phases of activity: (1) adoption and management of OE-transferred projects, and promotion of field-initiated research; (2) completion of 10 multicultural planning conferences and continuation of support for selected projects; and (3) creation of the Division, synthesis of planning conferences, and completion of the first program plan beginning to systematically focus on needs in the field. A new conceptual framework proposes a definition of multicultural education, identifies the relationship between multicultural and bilingual education, and draws from the definition a statement that information about cultural and linguistic communities should be used in the development of instructional programs for children of ethnic minority background of limited English-speaking ability. The new framework also provides a structure for organizing and assigning priorities to continuing and proposed Division activities. (Author/AM)

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OVERVIEW OF CURRENT STRATEGIES OF THE
MULTICULTURAL/BILINGUAL DIVISION
AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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After a long history of relative inactivity and limited national concern, there is currently a groundswell of educational practices and research activity in bilingual education. The beginning of a similar ferment is taking place in multicultural education. Most of these trends started in the late 1960's and are represented in landmark federal legislation such as the Bilingual Education Act, and the adoption by certain states of bilingual legislation. The trends are also represented in state and federal court decisions, and the activities of bilingual task forces and advocacy groups within professional organizations and minority communities. The Education Amendments of 1972 in part reflected these trends by establishing the National Institute of Education (NIE) to carry out a policy of providing every person an equal opportunity to receive an education of high quality regardless of cultural or ethnic background, sex, or socio-economic characteristics.

The Multicultural/Bilingual Division at NIE was established in January of 1975 as a further reflection of the increased attention to cultural and linguistic factors in education. The Division is organizationally part of NIE's Educational Equity Group and parallels four other units including desegregation studies, a women's research program, a congressionally mandated study of compensatory education, and a congressionally mandated study of school safety. The Equity Group provides the agency with a program priority of research areas for improving equal educational opportunity.

Background of the NIE Multicultural/Bilingual Division

The emergence of the Multicultural/Bilingual Division and of NIE's interest in minority education programs and research can be traced through at least three phases of activity. Each of these phases must be examined to

understand the organizational climate in which the present priorities were developed. The description of these phases will indicate how the present programmatic conceptualization and structure emerged out of early project management activities.

The first stage involved the transfer of projects from the U.S. Office of Education (OE) to NIE when the Institute was established in 1972. Several of these projects had a multicultural/bilingual focus and were being conducted by the Regional Laboratories and Centers, while others were being conducted at Universities. The projects have in some cases reached completion; in other cases they have been continued as part of the Division's present programmatic thrust. Soon after the NIE inherited administrative control over transferred OE research projects, two open or field initiated national grant competitions were held. These solicited work in, among other areas, "diversity, pluralism, and opportunity in educational systems." A number of grants made under these two competitions were focused on linguistic and cultural factors in education. Several are still in progress and are now part of the present Multicultural/Bilingual Division. Despite the accumulation of these projects, there was no specific NIE administrative unit concerned with multicultural or bilingual education, nor was there a group to coordinate the overall research activities in educational equity.

The second phase of development that lead to the creation of the Division and helped shape its present focus was a series of 10 Multicultural Planning Conferences conducted in 1974. The conferences were organized by the NIE Multicultural Task Force, then a new part of a larger administrative unit, the Office of Research. The purpose of these conferences was to elicit

recommendations for a comprehensive research agenda based on the issues which affect cultural and ethnic minorities. Participants included individuals of diverse practitioner and academic backgrounds and were members of the following cultural groups: Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Blacks, Hawaiian Americans, and Poly-ethnic Whites. All participants had expertise in working with minority communities and students who are bicultural or bilingual. Among the recommendations the conference participants made were for the NIE to increase the professional participation and recruitment of minorities in policy formulation and research, and to sponsor research with an explicit theme of multiculturalism. The numerous and exhaustive recommendations in multicultural and bilingual education included studies on policy, assessment, language acquisition, curriculum development, and teacher preparation. As a result of the concerns expressed in these conferences and the continuing interest at NIE in educational equity, plans were initiated to form a major group devoted to equity with multicultural/bilingual activities as one component.

The third phase in the emergence and consolidation of the NIE Multicultural/Bilingual Division began in 1975 and extends to the present. This phase is marked by the formal conversion of the Task Force to a Division in the Equity Group, the synthesis of the recommendations from the Multicultural Planning Conferences¹, and the development of a program plan for FY 1976² that identifies a representative set of projects which begin to address needs in the field.

1

A summary of the conference recommendations and the issues discussed as well as a list of participants is available from the Division under the title Multicultural Planning Conference.

2

The NIE Multicultural/Bilingual Division Program Plan for FY 1976 is also available upon request.

Ongoing sources of policy influence to which the newly created Division responds include the original legislation which established NIE, federal and state legislation specifically concerned with multicultural/bilingual education, state and federal court decisions concerning standards for educating ethnic and linguistic minorities, and other recommendations from individuals and groups within and outside the Institute. In addition, the Division has been coordinating efforts with other agencies in HEW, particularly the Office of Bilingual Education and Office of Indian Education as well as both the National Center for Educational Statistics and the OE's Office of Planning, Budgeting, and Evaluation.

A constant factor throughout all three phases has been the actual size of the Division's budget and the Institute and Division relationships to the Regional Labs and Centers. The Labs and Centers have been funded by NIE since 1972 and before that by the U.S. Office of Education. At Congressional initiative in FY 1976 NIE provided 26 million or roughly 37% of its total 70 million dollar budget to the Labs and Centers. The corresponding figures in the Multicultural/Bilingual Division were 2.5 million or roughly 78% of a 3.2 million dollar budget. The relatively heavy allocation of Division funds to Labs and Centers can be attributed in part to the continued financial support of ongoing projects in multicultural/bilingual education but also to the recency of the Division's establishment as an organizational entity at NIE, and to the recency with which a substantive and issue-oriented program has been generated in multicultural/bilingual education. Much of the Division's past effort had been devoted to monitoring and providing input to the formulation of lab and center research activities. 6

Activities at Labs and Centers funded by the Multicultural/Bilingual Division can be largely described as product development and field testing efforts. For example, the Southwest Education Development Laboratory has produced an extensive selection of curricula that has been field tested with bilingual/bicultural students, and the Northwest Regional Laboratory is in the process of developing supplementary readers for Native American children. At the Stanford Research and Development Center, research-based teacher training approaches in language arts are being identified for use in workshops for teachers of bilingual children and for teachers of bidialectical children. Additionally, the UCLA Center^{for the Study of Evaluation} is preparing criterion-referenced instruments to diagnose and assess reading proficiency in Spanish for grades K-6.

At the completion of the third phase, in which a program plan for FY 1976 was prepared, the need became apparent for a conceptual framework within which to discuss the projects and generate new projects. There was no lack of new projects that could be suggested, but a framework was needed for guiding existing projects, for prioritizing the projects that could be developed, and for assuring that their contribution to knowledge would be cumulative. However, despite the existence of many philosophical overviews about the importance of multicultural education, no concrete empirical models existed of how multicultural/bilingual educational research could be integrated in a cumulative fashion.

Proposed Division Strategies

The Division's immediate task for future planning is to assimilate what can be learned from available research and to match this knowledge with

recommendations from the Multicultural Planning Conferences. As part of this strategy, the Division must start thinking in longer range terms, since it is apparent that multicultural/bilingual education will be part of the educational landscape, and rightfully so, for many years to come. Equally important, if the United States is to have a meaningful multiethnic society and practice cultural democracy in its approach to education, the Division and NIE must continue cooperation with communities, teachers, researchers, and other institutions in efforts to develop and improve upon culturally appropriate curricula, pedagogies, and other educational support systems.

Future Division research goals and strategies will be consistent with a conceptual framework which defines multicultural education as a teaching and learning process which incorporates the affective values, cognitive styles, and cultural identities of students into the instructional process.

Bilingual education can be seen as the part of multicultural education which deals with the use of more than one language in a single instructional setting.

Indeed we are all now aware that bilingual education, if it focuses exclusively on linguistic components in learning and communication, will be inadequate since it does not address itself explicitly to the presence of cultural values, cognitive styles, and specific symbols of ethnic identity which are involved in instruction and learning.

The relationship between language and its cultural content must be fully appreciated if we are to strengthen linguistic abilities, understand cognitive differences in communication, and the cultural values of students in an educational setting. Cultures are learned through the language of communication and interaction. Similarly, cognitive styles

grow out of linguistic formulations and cultural values and concepts expressed in language and at times unique to a specific language.

The issues with which the Division is concerned are the synthesis of cultural and linguistic dimensions of education within a unitary program of research and development, and the application of these efforts to the challenge of educating cultural and linguistic minority students. Accordingly, the purposes of the Division can be stated as follows: (1) to develop an understanding of the educational needs, characteristics, and content of cultural and linguistic communities, and (2) to assist schools in applying this understanding to instructional practices and thereby assure equal educational opportunities to children of minority cultural background or limited English-speaking ability. These purposes are based on the premise that the ability of schools to make effective instructional decisions for students of distinct ethnic or linguistic backgrounds requires an understanding of the characteristics of the communities the students represent.

To achieve these purposes the Division will support research and development in two closely interrelated areas:

- o Social/Cultural Processes--activities concerned with identifying the content of cultural and linguistic communities that impinge upon educational programs and the processes by which the content is acquired in specific types of community settings.
- o Instructional Processes--activities concerned with utilizing information about cultural and linguistic communities in instructional decision making and implementation.

Initiatives in Social/Cultural Processes

The production of information about the dynamic characteristics of cultural and linguistic communities that are of importance for instructional planning can be realized by focusing research efforts on cultural content and the processes by which the content is acquired. Cultural content includes value orientations and norms, kinship patterns and loyalties, communication networks, socialization patterns, and roles and responsibilities of parents and children. Cultural content influences the processes of acquiring first or second languages and strategies for cognitive or interpersonal interaction. The content in part determines who participates in interactions where learning occurs; it also influences what takes place during the interactions. Consequently, information concerning cultural processes is equally as important as information about the content for instructional decision making.

The Division will focus on two approaches to obtaining and utilizing information about cultural content and process. The first approach consists of providing information directly to schools about the needs and values of communities by establishing models of community participation in educational decision making. The second approach consists of providing information indirectly to schools through the medium of ethnographic studies of student proficiencies, community teaching roles, and student learning processes. Studies conducted in the second approach will be designed to utilize in educational settings the ethnographic information collected. For each approach, variation in cultural content and process within and between communities will be investigated.

1. Community participation in Educational Decisions

Analyses will be conducted of community characteristics which

lend themselves to participation in educational goal formation, curriculum review, and curriculum preparation. Included at present is a project in which Native Americans provide the content from their own culture for supplementary readers and review the development of the resulting curriculum. A new project will identify the relationship between community characteristics and models of language planning and curriculum review where communities participate jointly in decision making with educational institutions.

2. Student Proficiency

Investigations will be conducted of the impact of variations in cultural content across communities on functional language, social interactions, and cognitive strategies used by students in community settings. The relationship of proficiencies evident in non-school settings to those valued or instrumental to learning in educational settings will be identified and applied to instructional planning.

3. Teaching Roles in Communities

Comparative analyses will be conducted across communities of the roles and responsibilities of parents, family, and other community members in transmitting cultural content to children in community settings. The possible extension of these roles to transmitting school-related information will be explored.

4. Student Learning Processes

Investigations will be supported of the approaches linguistic and ethnic minority students use in acquiring information in

communities and their strategies either individually or with peers for dealing with home, community, and school instruction.

Initiatives in Instructional Processes

Information about the dynamic characteristics of cultural and linguistic communities can be applied to instruction by focusing on decisions that are essential to providing multicultural/bilingual education. Critical decisions occur in the following areas: identification of students in need of multicultural or bilingual education, preparation of teachers, design of effective instructional approaches, and evaluation of student progress. Each decision is seen as being influenced by distinct characteristics of the community setting and of the students, and can be elaborated as follows:

1. Identification

Analyses will be conducted of procedures to identify student needs and to diagnose level of student proficiency for entry into multicultural/bilingual programs. Projects include preparation of a critical analysis and comparative evaluation of assessment instruments, determination of the validity of assessment procedures used for identification, and development of instruments to assess reading proficiency in Spanish.

2. Teacher Preparation

Procedures and standards will be identified and proposed for in-service and pre-service preparation of teachers for multicultural/bilingual programs. Research is presently being conducted on teacher training in language arts in multicultural/bilingual programs.

3. Instructional Approaches

Effective conditions for educating children in multicultural/bilingual classrooms will be analyzed. Projects will include a critical analysis of curriculum materials, an intensive analysis of exemplary bilingual programs, and a comparison across language groups of different instructional strategies appropriate to distinct community settings for introducing oral language and reading with children of limited English-speaking ability.

4. Evaluation of Student Progress and Program Outcomes

Student and situational characteristics that signal a student's readiness to assume an increased proportion of instruction in English will be analyzed. Procedures will also be explored for developing evaluation designs and providing technical assistance to school systems in assessing their multicultural/bilingual programs.

Apart from the Division activities mentioned above, one other important step is being taken to meet the needs of the children of limited English-speaking ability. This is an activity involving a formal agreement between NIE and the Office of Education. The agreement designates the activities for which each agency is responsible under Section 742 of the 1974 Bilingual Education Act. The understanding clarifies roles and responsibilities for the Act's mandate to:

- o undertake studies to determine the basic educational needs, language acquisition characteristics of, and most effective conditions for educating children of limited English-speaking ability;
- o develop and disseminate instructional materials and equipment suitable for use in bilingual education programs; and
- o establish and operate a national clearinghouse of information for bilingual education.

Although the Act authorizes 5 million dollars for each of a number of years for these activities, as yet no money has been Congressionally appropriated and none has been requested for FY 1977. Nevertheless we are hopeful that the appropriation will eventually receive Congressional support in that the addition of these activities to those already scheduled at NIE under our own appropriation will produce a more comprehensive response to the needs of the field.

Conclusions

The overview presented of the Multicultural/Bilingual Division at NIE describes three phases in the evolution of the program and proposes a new conceptual framework leading to strategies for research and development. The three phases are: (1) adoption and management of OE-transferred projects, and promotion of field-initiated research; (2) completion of 10 multicultural planning conferences and continuation of support for selected projects; and (3) creation of the Division, synthesis of the planning conferences, and

completion of the first program plan beginning to systematically focus on needs in the field.

The new conceptual framework proposes a definition of multicultural education, identifies the relationship between multicultural and bilingual education, and draws from the definition a statement that information about cultural and linguistic communities should be used in the development of instructional programs for children of ethnic minority backgrounds or limited English-speaking ability. The new framework also provides a structure for organizing and prioritizing continuing and proposed Division activities.